

# City of Seal Beach



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November 10, 1997

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FOR LATE FILED

Mr. William Kennard  
Chairman Designate  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20554

*Ex Parte Letter Re: Cases WT 97-197,<sup>92</sup> MM Docket 97-182, and DA 96-2140*

Dear Chairman Kennard:

Please terminate all action in the above-referenced matters. They attempt to make the FCC the "Federal Zoning Commission" for cellular and broadcast towers and violate the intent of Congress, the Constitution and basic principles of Federalism. Congress and the courts have long recognized that zoning is a matter of peculiarly local concern. The FCC has no zoning knowledge or expertise and is certainly not accessible to our local citizens.

For these reasons and others, Congress expressly preserved local zoning authority over cellular towers in the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Now the FCC is trying to get this jurisdiction back by issuing rules which improperly infringe on local zoning authority.

The FCC's efforts to assume jurisdiction over any local zoning matters where RF radiation is mentioned is unacceptable. The FCC ignores the fact that we cannot necessarily control the statements citizens make during public meetings of out legislative bodies. Our city, and all cities in California, are required by State law to allow citizens to speak on any topic they wish, even on items that are not on a meeting agenda. This is a part of what local government is all about.

Some of our citizens may be concerned about radiation from cellular towers. For the reasons set forth above, we cannot prevent citizens from mentioning their concerns to us during our public comment time on a meeting agenda. The FCC's attempt to use this proposal as a means to seize zoning authority and reverse local

decisions violates basic principles of Federalism, Freedom of Speech, and the rights of our citizens to petition their government. This is particularly true if a municipality expressly says it is not considering such statements (that go beyond the radiation authority Congress left with municipalities) and the decision is completely valid on other grounds, such as the impact of the tower on property values or aesthetics.

For similar reasons, the FCC cannot "second guess" the reasons for a municipality's decision. The FCC, like the courts, is bound by the stated reasons given by a municipality. Either those stated reasons are sufficient to uphold the decision or they are not. The FCC cannot "second guess" a municipality's true reasons any more than the courts can "second guess" the true reasons for the FCC's decisions.

The FCC's proposal to ban moratoria on cellular towers is objectionable for many of the reasons set forth above. It also fails to recognize that for some municipalities moratoria are a well recognized zoning tool, particularly while zoning ordinance provisions are being revised. More importantly, Congress took away the FCC's authority over cellular tower zoning, and this includes moratoria.

Similarly, please terminate the FCC's proposed rulemaking preempting local zoning of broadcast towers. As you well know, broadcast towers can be over 2,000 feet high – they are some of the tallest structures known to man. It is astounding that you would propose that municipalities cannot consider the impact of such towers on property values, the environment or aesthetics, and that even safety considerations take second place. Safety always has to be the first priority.

Setting artificial time limits for municipalities to act on zoning, environmental, and building permit approvals for such towers serves no useful purpose. It is a violation of the U.S. Constitution, the Communications Act and Federalism for you to put time limits on municipalities to act on all local approvals and then state that all such applications will be automatically deemed granted if we don't act within the timeframe, even if the application is incomplete or violates local law.

The FCC should consider how it would react if it was told that any broadcast license application would be automatically deemed granted unless the FCC acted on it within 21 to 45 days; that this rule applied whether or not the application was complete; whether or not the applicant was foreign or domestically owned or otherwise qualified; or even whether the frequencies were available. And the rule would apply without regard to whether the proposed tower was at the end of an airport runway, in a wetland, a historic district, or adjacent to your residential neighborhood.

For these reasons the proposed actions all violate the Communications Act and the Constitution. Please terminate all of these proceedings without taking the action proposed therein.

Sincerely,



**Keith R. Till**  
City Manager, City of Seal Beach

cc: **Mr. William F. Caton**  
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**Distribution: See attached Distribution List**

**Concerns re: FCC Preemption of Local Zoning -  
Cellular and Broadcast Towers**

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*FCC Preemption of Local Zoning- Cellular and Broadcast Towers  
Concerns of City of Seal Beach, California  
November 10, 1997*

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